

Lifestyle



Bremont's Journey



An Interview with Giles English,
Co-Founder, Bremont Watch Company

SOLO 34 AF-MOP ladies watch (left); Bremont MB 10th Anniversary watch (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Flying historic aircraft has been in Giles and Nick English's blood from a very early age, as has their love for watches and all things mechanical. In creating the Bremont brand, the brothers were looking to produce beautifully made, robust timepieces inspired by their history in aviation. The brothers started working together



Giles English

on the watch designs following the death of their father in a vintage-aircraft accident in 1995, in which Nick broke over 25 bones. It was a few years later that the brothers made an emergency landing in their 70-year-old plane in a pea field in Northern France. The field belonged to a wonderful old farmer, M. Antoine Bremont, who took them in, showed them his workshop and shared with them his love of clocks as well as planes. The brothers set out to make a British watch that would not only last a lifetime, but would be tested beyond the normal limits and could match the best Swiss watches for quality.

COMPANY BRIEF Bremont (bremont.com) is an award-winning British company producing beautifully engineered chronometers at its headquarters in Henley-on-Thames, England. Time began for Bremont in 2002, when it embarked on a journey to make beautifully crafted pilot's watches of exceptional quality. Like all things mechanical, the timepieces had to be tested beyond the normal call of duty. The watches in the core range are all chronometer rated and Bremont is one of the few companies offering a three-year warranty on every product. Immensely precise, reliable and durable, Bremont watches are hand built in limited numbers. Each is designed to appeal to those who share a passion for—and appreciation of—the innovation and mastery behind a beautiful mechanical wristwatch.

Has your vision for creating Bremont remained consistent throughout the 17 years the company has been in existence?

We have exceeded our original dream even though we dreamed high, and we knew how difficult it would be to get to that point. We

have delivered beyond what we felt we could, which is really exciting.

However, we never thought it would be easy for many reasons: one, we manufacture as much as we can in Britain. The challenge of a watch company is that we are in a very high-tech engineering business. We have to buy high-cost machines and machine high-accu-

racy components, all while building a brand.

We also built our own boutiques, so we have to be multifaceted in what we're trying to deliver.

It's been a journey and we have achieved so much, but it's all based on the long-term vision we've always had.

When you look at new product offerings, are you primarily building off the existing collections or are you developing new collections?

We have focused on staying true to our brand. We get questions from every retailer asking why we don't put diamonds on a particular watch or follow another trend, but it's easy for a company and brand to end up looking very generic.

We set out to design something unique and we have been true to that all the way through. However, we do get pulled and pushed around.

The challenge is to remain fresh and continue to launch new products every year. We want people to pick up our watches and know they are Bremont as opposed to wondering what they could be.

A big part of our development, which we haven't fully realized yet, is creating a British-made movement that we've been working on for four years. When we finally have that done, hopefully in the next 12 months, it will represent a massive step up for us and we can sit back and be proud of what we have achieved.

Will you discuss the new releases that Bremont will be introducing to the market?

Our big new release this year is the Armed Forces collection. The past 10 years, we have been making bespoke watches for the military around the world. This accounts for about 22 percent of our business.

This year, the MOD formally announced Bremont as their official partner, so for the first time we can sell commercial military watches to the general public.

We have come up with this military-inspired design collection for each of the three armed forces. It is a big launch for us and it has been very positive.

We also have an Anniversary MB watch which celebrates 10 years of our partnership with Martin-Baker, a British company manufacturing over 70 percent of the ejection seats for the air forces globally. We are making 310 of these watches, which features a titanium barrel and the ejector seat from an F-35 fighter jet engraved into the case back.

The other key collection for us is the ladies collection, which is the SOLO-34, a 34mm ladies watch collection, which for the first time features a mother of pearl dial.

What has made stand-alone boutiques so critical as a part of Bremont's brand building efforts?

Brick-and-mortar retail is having a very hard time, but we're selling predominantly to men from 30 to 65 and, at the price point at which we are selling, I still think people want to physically hold the watch rather than just see it online.

For us, retail is also about customer service. If someone wants to get their watch serviced, a boutique enables us to have a point of contact. Brands need that contact because that is how we build loyalty and trust with customers.

You co-founded Bremont with your brother, Nick. What has made your relationship work so well?

I'm incredibly lucky to have a brother who has the same interests as me which is why it has worked so well.

There are two things that have led to this. The first is trust. I can trust my brother and know he has my back and he's going to cover me. We look after each other and that's incredibly important in business.

The second is that the brand is built on what Nick and I love, which is designing the product together. Because we like the same things, it's very easy. If I design something, I will take his input over it seriously. Ultimately, we make those decisions very quickly and get to the end product we're happy with. ●